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Citizens to Jeff: Fix it First

Several Testify on Wixom/Beck at Transportation Hearing

(LANSING) -Dozens of Oakland County citizens, businesses, and local officials testified today in support of two vital road projects put on hold indefinitely by Gov. Jennifer Granholm. The Wixom and Beck road interchange projects got their biggest endorsements from people who are concerned about the danger posed by the crumbling roads and bridges.

"When you've got children behind you that you are responsible for, you don't want to drive across bridges that shake with just the slightest amount of traffic," Mary Kotrich, school bus driver for Novi Community Schools said of the Beck Road interchange. "It is so important that we fix this."

The Michigan Department of Transportation held the hearing in response to the outcry that followed the department's announcement that Oakland County would be left out of its "listening tour." The tour is supposed to gather input on the department's five-year Road and Bridge Plan, which the governor amended to exclude 16 projects within the county.

MDOT Director Gloria Jeff set up hearing at the insistence of State Sen. Nancy Cassis (R- Novi) after Jeff skipped a scheduled June 4 meeting with the director of the Oakland County Road Commission.

"The exclusion of the Wixom and Beck road projects from your proposed five year plan is troubling because they have been on MDOT's radar screen for more than 10 years," Cassis wrote in a statement to Director Jeff read at the hearing by the senator's husband, Victor Cassis.

"We must remember that these interchanges were constructed in the 1950's to accommodate farm traffic," Cassis continued. "This is not the 1950's anymore. There has been an astonishing population growth in the area where safety issues must be addressed."

Sen. Cassis expects the governor to reconsider her decision and restore the projects in the 5 Year Road and Bridge Plan.

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